

RECKLESS RALPH'S

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

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MY PAL, THE ELEPHANT

by Joe Gantner

It was Circus Day, and I was over at the neighboring town of Columbia, Mo., watching the Great Hagenback-Wallace Circus put up their tents.

It was early in the morning, and I was sitting on some bales of straw, watching the big Circus wagons roll and rumble into the show grounds, pulled by eight and twelve horses.

Several rough looking roustabouts came into the grounds, and seeing the straw bales, they surrounded me, and sat on the straw, and conversed together. Most of these men were negroes, but there were a few white men with them.

I am an ardent circus fan, and I s'arted to talk to them.

I made the remark, that the Ringling-Barnum Bailey Circus was not parading that year, and one mean looking white roustabout looked angrily at me said:

"What does a d—towner like you, know about a circus?"

"All I know!" I replied heatedly, "is that the Billboard says that the Big Show will not parade this year."

"I don't care what the Billboard says," said the roustabout, "It is smart alecks like you, who are spoiling the circus."

"You are wrong there," I said getting mad, "It is real Circus fans like I who keep the show going, and who keep a bum like you on the job."

"I am a bum, am I?" answered the roustabout venomously, "Why you d—dirty townier I am going to cut your heart out for that."

He sprang to his feet, and pulled

out a long handled pocket knife, and touching a spring, a long blade projected.

Just then the boss canvasman's whistle sounded, and all of the roustabouts started to leave.

One strong roustabout grabbed my antagonist by the arm, forceable pulling him away, and saying:

"Come on Butch! if we want to eat this morning, we have got to put up that d—tent."

Butch reluctantly went along, saying over his shoulder to me,

"If I catch you anywheres on the grounds today, I am going to cut your throat from ear to ear."

"That's what you think" I answered.

Whew!—what a relief it was to get rid of that fellow. It is peculiar how a dangerous quarrel can start over absolutely nothing.

I sat there thinking, I had come about thirty-five miles by train from Boonville, Mo., that morning to see the Circus and I was determined that nothing would spoil the day for me, Butch or no Butch.

Wagon after wagon were pulling into the show-grounds, and poles and canvas were being laid out all over the field. Crowds were gathering, circus men were shouting, boys were helping to spread the canvas, Mechanical stake drivers were driving stobs into the ground, also groups of men were driving the stakes with sledge hammers into the ground, with the familiar sound of "click, click, click."

As I sat there I could not help thinking that the happiest days of my boyhood was when a big railroad circus came to my home town, and our home being on a high hill overlooked the

show-grounds, and the joy we had in watching the big circuses like Adam Forepaugh, and Sells Bros., John Robinson's Ten Big Shows, Ringling Bros., 101 Ranch Wild West, and many others pull into the grounds.

As I sat there I could not help feeling that Big Circuses were becoming a thing of the past, like old 5c weeklies, of which Nick Carter, Tip Top, Buffalo Bill, Diamond Dick, Pluck & Luck, Young Klondike, etc., were representative of the leading brands of the lurid, colorful, fiction of my boyhood days. I could not think of circuses without thinking of 5c weeklies, because they were both intimately connected with the growth of my personality.

The big circuses were just beginning to cut out their parades, and a parade is to a circus fan, what fire-crackers is to a small boy on the 4th of July. I believe the Al. G. Barnes Circus was the first big show to eliminate their circus parade, then the Great Ringling Bros. Barnum Bailey Circus was the next to withdraw their parades. To a real circus fan, it is not so much the circus that gives him a thrill, as to know it is circus day, and that there is something exciting in the town for at least one day, and a big parade helps along this illusion.

My reflections were stopped suddenly, by hearing some small boys shout:

"Here comes the elephants!"

I looked down the road and could see the big lumbering brutes, with their mouse color grey look, throwing dust upon themselves. There was quite a herd of them, for the Hagenback-Wallace Circus was a large one, and you can tell a large circus by the number of elephants and railroad cars they carry.

I like elephants, and I went down to the gate and watched them come into the grounds. Then I walked around the show-grounds until I heard the bugle blow to get ready for the parade, then I started to walk to the main street of the town as I always like to see the parade on the principal street.

It was a long walk, and when I arrived at Broadway the town was crowded, and balloon men were shouting their wares all along the street. One of the balloon men was Butch,

and he glarred at me, with those snaky eyes of his, as he passed by me.

Soon brassy music could be heard, and we anxiously watched a corner where we knew the parade could first be seen. Nearer and louder the music sounded when suddenly in the distance highly caparisoned horses could be seen with colorful riders on their backs. Big band wagons, large cages, clowns, more riders, etc. and the Great Hagenback-Wallace Circus Parade was rolling and rumbling towards me with only that peculiar soft sound of wood hitting against wood that is individual to circus wagons.

How can I describe to a younger generation who has never seen a real big circus parade, the color, the glamour, and the glory of the passing pageantry. The hauteur of the riders, the heavy Percheron horses with colored tasseled heads, four, eight, and sometimes twelve pulling ponderous wagons covered with statues, and mirrors, some with bands on top, with the trombone players pointing their trombones over the sides at you as they passed.

What a thrill it is to see the elephants approaching, holding with their trunks the tail of the elephant ahead of them, weaving from side to side the men sitting on their heads. You instinctively looked around to see where you would run if these mighty mammals should take it into their heads to break away. The Steam Callopie smoky and loud enough to be heard for miles, always ended these parades.

After the parade, I went into a restaurant and had a good dinner, then I bought five pounds of peanuts to give to the elephants uptown because you can get more for your money than at the showgrounds. Then I got into a crowded bus for the circus grounds. On arriving there we passed the rear end of the parade, and crowds, stands, and a big city of tents were covering the whole pasture.

It was still too early for the menagerie and big show tent to open, and after listening to a barker in front of the side-show tent, I went in and looked at the freaks, and to be frank with you I care less for the side-show than any part of the circus, I did not stay to see all of their attractions, and leaving the tent, I saw that the big show was open, and buying a tick-

et I was soon within the menagerie tent.

The crowd was all milling around the monkey cage, watching them do some funny antics, and seeing the elephants on the other side of the tent lined up weaving their trunks back and forth, I went over towards them and started to feed them peanuts, when suddenly I was startled by an angry voice in back of me saying:

"Aha! Here's where you d— townner going to get yours."

I looked around quickly, and Butch was coming with an open knife.

Not even an elephant (bull) man was near, and the camels and stands kept the crowds from seeing me.

I looked around for a club or anything to defend myself with, but could see nothing.

"Watch me cut a hole in your stomach," said Butch raising back his arm, and with doubled fists I was ready to leap aside.

Help suddenly came from an unexpected source.

The old elephant I had been feeding, quickly reached her trunk over, and pulled Butch's straw hat off of his head, and very rapidly she reversed the hat, and brought it down on Butch's head with such a resounding twack that it could be heard all over the menagerie. With Butch's head looking over the top of his own hat, the elephant shook Butch so that his teeth actually rattled. When the hat was about to break, the elephant with a slight push of her trunk, sent Butch reeling backwards towards a tent pole. He shook the entire tent when he hit that pole. Butch sat on the ground with a disconcerted idiotic expression on his face. Suddenly realizing what had happened he jumped up his face distorted with anger, and seeing an elephant hook in the hands of one of the running bull men, he rushed up and grabbed it out of his hand, and returning quickly, I heard him say:

"No d— bull is going to do that to me, I am going to beat the life out of you blankety, blankety bull."

The elephant stood rigid legged with her trunk on the ground.

Butch with rage in his heart, aimed the hook at the elephants eye. Suddenly the elephant raised her trunk, shaping it like the end of a saxophone and with a hiss like a fire hose sent

a dark looking substance right into Butch's face. It was dust she had been sucking up into her trunk, and Butch's face looked like a black-faced comedian with a minstrel show. Butch yelled:

"Help! Help! I am blinded."

The bull men quickly surrounded Butch, and lead him under the side wall of the tent, and I could hear him groaning miserably.

One of the bull men patted the elephant on the trunk, and said:

"Good old Molly! To think it would be you to teach that dope-fiend a lesson."

I patted the elephant on the trunk, and held out the sack of peanuts to her, and said:

"Thank you old girl—here take the rest of these peanuts, as a small appreciation for saving my life."

Molly contentedly ate the peanuts, the other elephants were weaving too and fro, and some were bellowing in such a way, that I could almost swear they were laughing, and enjoying the whole affair.

Just then the concert band in the big top started to play, and I left My Pal, the Elephant for the big show about now ready to start.

Getting a good seat in the center of the tent, high up near the side walls I watched the afternoon performance. First, the Grand Entree, the elephant act, acrobats, riding acts, high-wire acts, Liberty Horse acts, clowns, flying trapeze acts, and all the routine of a big circus. The circus band with caliope made loud rhythmic music during the performance.

When the show was over, I was going through the menagerie, when someone called me:

"Hey Bo! come over here."

It was Butch in a pop-corn stand, I wondered if I was going to have more trouble.

"I am sorry Mister I caused you so much trouble today," said Butch repentantly, "I hope you will forgive me, I am mean when under the influence of liquor or dope, but that elephant sobered me up."

"That's O. K. Butch," I said.

"You look like a fine fellow, and if I can ever do you a favor, just call on me," Butch said shaking hands.

"If I was you Butch, I would throw that knife away."

"I'll do that Pard," he said smiling.

I left the tent, and went down to the depot, to catch my train for home. At the railroad tracks they were already loading some of the big red wagons on the circus train. Waiting for my train to pull out I watched them pull the heavy wagons on the flats.

Several weeks later I saw in the Billboard that when the show was in Texas, that Butch got into an argument with a Texan and he pulled his knife, and the Southerner drew his gun, and it was the final curtain for poor Butch.

NEWSY NEWS

by Ralph F. Cummings

Have you seen "Comic's Novel," No. 1. Avarcho, Dictator of Death, got out in picture form, instead of a dime novel. Published by Fawcett Publications, Inc., 22 W. Putnam Ave., Greenwich, Conn., and sells for 10c.

A. M. Brooking, director of Hastings Nebr., Museum, passed away in January 1946, so we just received word.

William Cleveland Miller, age 62 years, retired Architectural Designer, died at his home, 922 W. Gramercy Pl., San Antonio, Texas Sunday morning, June 22, 1947. Bro. Miller was born at McComb City, Miss., Dec. 25th, 1884. Later living and attending school at Meridan, Vicksburg and Jackson, Miss. He practiced his profession in his home state and for the past 35 years in his adopted state of Texas. Also has to his credit some very nice work in the state of Florida.

Survivors are his wife, Mrs. W. C. Miller, a sister, Mrs. M. D. Payne of Clarksdale, Miss., Nephew — M. D. Payne also of Clarksdale, and 3 nieces Mrs. H. T. Dickey of Little Rock, Ark., Mrs. Mabel Alford, Birmingham, Ala., Mrs. Inez Payne-Ferguson, Clarksdale, Miss., a great niece, Mary Patricia Ferguson, Clarksdale, Miss. Services prior to sending the body to his former home in Miss. for interment were conducted at 6 P.M. Monday at Porter Loring Chapel, officiated by the pastor of Travis Park Methodist Church. Interment in Oakridge Cemetery, at Clarksdale, Miss., arranged by Richard Funeral Home, and officiated over by the Rev. E. Lucien Malone. Wed. morning June 25th.

He was a collector of our old tim-

ers, and has been a member for over 20 years of H. H. Bro.

Schoolboy Series No. 1 came out in 1946 price one shilling, has 36 pages and was sent in by Wm. M. Burns. Don't know if any more were published, or not, title is The Secret of the School, by Frank Richards (author of Billy Bunter).

Here's another good one. Hutchinson Pocket Special, 1/6 (about 35c in our money) called "Christmas Pie," miscellany for men and women, well illustrated, 160 pages. Sent in by Herbert Leckenby. There are lots of stories in it, but a couple of them are of interest, "Penny Dreadfuls," by Herbert Leckenby, pages 37 to 89. Has illustrations of Boys of England No. 188 in it. Also Christmas Present for Roger, by Frank Richards, the man who invented Billy Bunter.

Guess what just came in, The Little Chief, Vol. 3 No. 8, Aug 1869. A monthly visitor to the schoolroom and home circle, pub. by A. C. Shortridge, Indianapolis, Ind. Well illustrated, etc. Don't get this monthly confused with our own "Little Chief Library" pards.

J. P. Guinon of Little Rock, Ark., says he and wife went on a vacation to his old stamping grounds down in New Mexico and Colorado, but didn't get that far, as they stopped off at San Antonio, Texas and went in swimming. J. P. smashed his right foot on a rock, and broke a toe or two. It didn't hurt the rock any, but it put an end to their vacation. So his wife had to do the driving and scared half to death, so was he. He's beginning to hop around pretty good now. I don't call that a very nice vacation, do you Gripper?

We hear that P. T. Barnum and Jenny Lind were illustrated on a couple of early banknotes.

July 10th, Eli A. Messier, Frank Henry and Clyde Wakefield were down here, also July 20th Cmdr. Frank C. Acker, U. S. N. was up with his family. We had a very fine chat on the Merriwells and Gil Patten too.

Clyde Wakefield, 6 Piedmont St., Worcester 3, Mass. expects to have a two centre page Sunday Newspaper section spread with pictures of himself and his dime and nickel novel collection in August 10th, so any one wanting a copy, send 10c to Clyde.

Wayne F. Flindt of Atlanta, Ga., has had a very hard time with his leg,

and hasn't been able to do anything for quite some time.

Richard E. Stalt is the World's largest cigar band collector, having a collection of over 50,000 different bands. That's some collection. Dick also collects stamps, novels, etc. He says he has a whole trunk full of duplicates, running into several million, so here you are fellows, he can supply you.

Have 4 reams of pre-war paper, 1 pink, 1 blue and 2 white. Nice. What am I offered—cash or trade?

Ralph F. Cummings, Fisherville, Mass.

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Ralph F. Cummings

Fisherville, Mass.

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Ralph F. Cummings

Fisherville, Mass.